JONATHAN PESTE

Radical Israeli Settlers

Ultimate Concerns, Political Goals and Violence

The focus of this article is the radical and activist parts of the wider Israeli settler community on the West Bank. This Radical Israeli Settler Movement should not be confused with the general settler community in the West Bank, even if the more radical groups often recruit their members from the general settler community. The Radical Israeli Settler Movement today includes groups such as Kach, The Committee for Safety on the Roads and The Jewish Legion. The purpose of this article is to analyse some instances of violence in the radical Israeli settler movement and to identify recurring features and processes in this violence. It will be argued that these features and processes are important factors in understanding why certain movements use violence. It will also be argued that future comparative studies are needed, which include other contexts where similar radical movements have become violent, in order to develop a general theory of ethno-religious movements using political violence.

There are certain theoretical issues in the study of religious movements turning to political violence which have not been approached in a satisfactory way. To date, scholars have often tried to identify dangerous elements in religious movements. Examples of such elements are dualism, absolute truth claims, apocalypticism, millennialism, holy war and totalism in the form of demands of blind obedience by followers (Kimball 2002: 41–185; Selengut 2003: 17–48, 95–181). Scholars have also pointed to dangerous situations such as alienation, humiliation, socioeconomic decline and occupation (Stern 2003: 9–62; Benjamin and Simon 2003: 408, 424; Pape 2005: 126). What needs further attention is an analysis of why similar movements in similar contexts sometimes become violent and sometimes not. The basic assumption is that these movements and situations may appear to resemble one another, but if there are different outcomes, there are also decisive differences to detect. The mainly quantitative studies by Jonathan Fox of ethno-religious conflicts should be complemented by attention to the different roles of religion in radical movements using political violence (Fox 2002 and 2004). The relationship between socio-political context, the

actions of radical movements and the role of ideology in these movements needs to be approached in order to enhance our ability to identify potentially violent movements.

The search for patterns of interaction between ideology and social context in the outcome of violence within different groups and movements is a complex issue, but it is less problematic than, for example, to claim that religious groups are more violent than secular groups (Juergensmeyer 2001: 146; Hoffman 1998: 88; Bloom 2005: 98). It is difficult to compare and establish levels of violence between different situations in different contexts. So far every argument for the extraordinary power of religion to motivate to violence has been unconvincing. Secular movements have proven able to copy every violent act of the religious movements, such as suicide attacks aiming to maximise casualties, in the same way that religious groups have often imitated the behaviour of secular groups (Pape 2005; Gambetta 2005; Bloom 2005). Secular groups use ideologies to legitimate violence for a higher purpose in the same way that religious groups do. Furthermore, secular groups can ritualise different behaviour.

From a methodological perspective religious and secular movements should be approached in the same way. There may be important differences between religious and non-religious movements and their connections to violence. Such differences should, however, be found as the result of empirical analysis and should not be the theoretical starting-point for an analysis of differences. Such a starting-point leads to a circular argument which tends to avoid the possibility of falsification. I propose to identify long-term ultimate concerns and short-term political goals in the ideology of movements such as the Radical Israeli Settler Movement.[1] These two aspects of ideology are related but are distinguished for analytical reasons and both aspects can be found in secular as well as religious ideologies. Radical political movements have ultimate concerns that they perceive as not open to compromises, but these are concretised in short-term and often changing political goals by the movements and are interpreted in relation to the socio-political situation by the movements. In certain situations violence becomes the chosen option.

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1 I am inspired by Catherine Wessinger's use of the notion of ultimate concern in her study of millennial violence, although most of the groups she discussed do not have any central political agenda. See Wessinger 2000: 2–6.

Jewish Radicalism in Israel

The term radicalism refers to an activist struggle to implement an ideology in society. Radical movements often oppose the social and political order in power. Of main interest here will be groups that at least in theory consider it legitimate to initiate violence in order to protect their ultimate concerns. Often being unable to physically wipe out their opponents, they use violence as a form of communication and aim at producing fear. Even if we choose not to use the word terrorism for such violence, it has often been an attractive choice for groups that perceive themselves as threatened and unable to defend their interests by other means.

However, far from every radical group uses violence, and the activist attitude can take many forms such as demonstrations, public speeches and rallies, performing demonstrative religious rituals and ceremonies in public, missionary activity, forming civil guards, establishing settlements and civil disobedience. Another form of radicalism is to avoid the outer society in isolated communities, for example by concentrating the followers in certain neighbourhoods or by establishing separate child-care centres and schools. However, many radical groups combine a selective avoidance with conquering and revolutionary behaviour.

There are at least four major contemporary expressions of Jewish radicalism in Israel: first there are ultra-orthodox anti-Zionist groups which belong to the Haredi ('those who tremble') population in Israel. What unites many Haredi is their anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli stance, since in their opinion the Messiah must arrive before the creation of a Jewish state in the Holy Land. Nonetheless, many Haredi live in Israel simultaneously as they refer to their existence there as an 'exile in exile'. We might say that the Haredi represent the most radical form of the passivist mode of messianism which is inherited from traditional rabbinical Judaism. In the social sphere, the Haredi isolate themselves from other parts of Israeli society, avoid secular education as far as possible, and do not do military service. One group, Neturei Karta, cooperates with the Palestinians and criticises the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians. Nevertheless, many Haredi are represented by political parties in the Israeli parliament and try to impose new religious laws in Israel. Another very important common opinion among the Haredi Jews is that it is strictly forbidden to enter the Temple Mount. The reason for this is that the holiest part of the temple, the Holy of Holies (*chayil*), is considered to be strictly off-limits. After the destruction of the temple in AD 70, knowledge of the exact location of the Holy of Holies was lost. For this reason the rabbis of the Talmud decided

that it was forbidden for Jews to enter the Temple Mount in order to avoid inadvertently desecrating the Holy of Holies. Those who disobey this prohibition were liable to the death penalty (*karet*). As implied before, there are some branches of Chassidism that try to overcome this restriction by a reinterpretation of religious sources, and actually pray on the Temple Mount. These branches often also have a positive attitude towards Israel in general and religious Zionists in particular (Ravitzky 1996: 40–78, 181–209; Inbari 2003).

A second form of Jewish radicalism is the secular right-wing Zionist movement, sometimes called revisionism. In the pre-Israeli years this right-wing movement was represented by Irgun and the Stern-Gang or Lehi (Shavit 1988). These movements initiated violence against Arabs on several occasions as revenge for Arab violence against Jews. When these organisations were dissolved, the political party Herut, which was led by Menachem Begin, became the main representative of right-wing Zionism. When Herut became part of the Likud coalition and was moderated from several perspectives, smaller, more radical parties emerged, such as Tzomet and the National Unity Party. The common assumption of these organisations is that there exists a Jewish nation which has a historical, cultural and religious link to a specific geographic area in the Middle East, and that the Jewish nation is legitimately entitled to claim political sovereignty over this area. Other political ideas of the secular right-wing movement are that Israel must have a strong army and secure its existence by holding as much territory as possible. Despite the mainly secular characteristics of this movement, religious elements can nevertheless be found in its ideology.[2]

A third example of Jewish radicalism is religious Zionism. Religious Zionism can be described as a religious orthodox movement that attempts to integrate activist Zionism into its ideology. An important aspect of religious Zionism is that it acknowledges an important role for secular Zionism. In addition, secular Jews, by creating the state of Israel, are fulfilling God's plan, even if they do so without knowing it. Ultimately, according to religious Zionists, all Jews will acknowledge God, and Israel

2 The existence of scattered religious ideas in this movement leads us to reflect upon the problem of deciding which movements are religious and which are not. How much or how little religious element does there have to be in the ideology of a certain movement for us to be able to label it as religious? If we do not search for a deciding difference between religious and non-religious movements, the problem does not become especially important.

will be transformed into a theocratic and messianic kingdom. This does not mean that there have not been conflicts between secular and religious Zionists, only that religious Zionists are prohibited from using violence against other Jews (Aran 1991; Ravitzky 1996: 79–144).

A fourth example is Kahanism, which is a radical ideology created by Meir Kahane. Kahanism explicitly calls for violence against Arabs if it fulfils the purpose of self-defence. Kahanism is not the only movement that has had such an ideology in the short history of Israel, but it is perhaps the most important movement today, which has split into several groups and organisations. In Kahanism the secular state of Israel is seen as something negative, which is an important difference in comparison with religious Zionism. The purpose of Kahanism is to overthrow the secular government and replace it with a religious government. To date, this ideological goal has generally only been expressed verbally (Sprinzak 1999: 180–285).

Religious Zionism and Kahanism are the main forms of radicalism that will be discussed in the rest of this paper. The notions of religious Zionism and Kahanism can be seen as scholarly terms referring to modern religious traditions and movements, but they also roughly correspond to a self-understanding in these movements in relation to the wider Jewish context. However, there exist today specific movements and groups that mix ideological elements from both religious Zionism and Kahanism. The Radical Israeli Settler Movement consists of both Kahanist groups and religious Zionist groups that are more or less inspired by the radical and activist ideology of Kahanism.

Several political goals can be found among both religious Zionists and Kahanists (Sprinzak 1999: 145–285): (1) There is often a maximalist view of the Holy Land together with an activist attitude to settle this territory. Hebron is for example often viewed as the second most holy city in Israel. Jerusalem must remain the undivided capital city of the Jewish state, but the view regarding Israel's biblical borders varies. The maximalist-activist position is realised by different means, from using the political system of Israel to different forms of activism, such as demonstrations and the establishment of settlements, terrorism and political assassinations. (2) Sometimes the establishment of the Third Temple on the Temple Mount is seen as a messianic necessity for the salvation of the Jewish people. The Jews are themselves responsible for achieving this. This goal is pursued by different means, from using Israel's political system to different forms of activism, such as attempting to pray on the Temple Mount in more or less provocative ways. There have been several attempts to destroy the Muslim buildings on the Temple Mount. (3) Some religious Zionist and Kahanist groups

organise civil guards and defence organisations as protection against Arab violence and terrorism. Sometimes we find the rhetoric of terrorism against terrorism.

The first and the third political expressions are most prominent among radical Israeli settlers, while the second, the goal to establish the Third Temple, is only explicit in certain groups. The Radical Israeli Settler movement can sometimes cooperate with secular right-wing radicals and temple-activists. There are even examples of alliances with Chabad Chassids, who do not see any religious significance in the State of Israel, but feel that the state protects the Jewish people and that any retreat from occupied land is wrong (Sprinzak 1999: 145–285). The ultimate concern of the Radical Israeli Settler Movement is the idea that it is necessary to preserve and establish a Greater Israel as interpreted in the light of the Bible and rabbinic sources. Depending on the changing situation in the Middle East from 1967, the Radical Israeli Settler Movement has articulated different concrete short-term political goals, which on some occasions have led to members initiating violent actions, both against Jews and non-Jews. Jerusalem is not the only important place for this movement, several other places, primarily on the West Bank, are accorded religious significance. The line between the radicalism of this movement and the wider settler community is not clear, and the lines between the various forms of Jewish radicalism are equally hazy. New groups and organisations evolve, existing groups change political and religious positions, new alliances are formed, and so on.

The Radical Israeli Settler Movement is an ethno-religious movement in the sense that it mixes ideas of both religion and ethnicity in its political ideology. Other names given to this kind of ideology are religious nationalism and world conquering fundamentalism (Juergensmeyer 1994: 1–8, 62–9; Almond *et al.* 2003: 160–3). The notion of an ethno-religious movement is not intended here to denote a typology that distinguishes between movements that are primarily or secondarily motivated by religion (Fox 2004: 122–5). In order to analyse the dynamic relation between ideology and social context in the outcome of violence there is need for a methodology that is sensitive to the complex interaction between different motivating elements, both on an individual level and on a group level. Individuals may join a radical movement, religious or otherwise, for a variety of reasons; these reasons vary between followers, and the motives for joining and staying can be different. The same dynamic is present on a group level where the goals and objectives can change over time and with the changing situation.

Religious Zionism

The founder of religious Zionism was Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935). He was the most important thinker to give activist Zionism a theology of world redemption. His son Zvi Yehuda Kook (1891–1982) became the ideological father of Gush Emunim, the Settler Movement, and he gave religious Zionism a more radical nationalist or ethno-religious character.[3]

Abraham Isaac Kook was born in Latvia and received a traditional Orthodox education. In 1904 he settled in Palestine and was appointed rabbi of Jaffa. Even though he was Orthodox he got on well with many secular Jews, often socialist in political orientation, many of whom arrived in Palestine at that time. He was stranded in Europe at the start of the First World War while at a conference in Switzerland. He lived in London at the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, by which Britain recognised the right of the Jewish people to a homeland in Palestine. Kook was one of the few Orthodox rabbis who saw the declaration as positive. After the war he returned to Palestine and was appointed the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine (1921–35). He soon came into conflict with other Orthodox Jews, for example, because he was in favour of secular education. The yeshiva he founded in Jerusalem, Mercaz Ha-Rav, taught secular as well as religious courses, and still does today. The purpose of the yeshiva was to educate individuals who would pursue both studies of the Torah and love of the Land of Israel. During his lifetime he wrote many books and other materials.

For Abraham Kook, the return of both secular and religious Jews to Israel had a historical significance of global proportions and was a step towards redemption. His religious nationalism was based on the belief that God leads both secular and religious Jews to return to the Holy Land. Kook relied on the Lurianic Kabbalah to give Zionist activism a theological meaning. In short, in the Lurianic Kabbalah the creation of the world involves the scattering of divine elements into creation, which is seen as a kind of accident. In the beginning divine light flows into ten vessels which cannot withstand the strength of the light and accordingly break. Divine elements are trapped in the broken pieces of the vessels, which become the material world. The process of redemption is given a world-historical dimension by requiring that the scattered divine elements must be recol-

3 The general description of religious Zionism is based on Aran 1991; Don-Yehiya 1994; Ravitzky 1996: 79–144; Sprinzak 1999: 145–285.

lected. Symbolically this recollection is paralleled in Kook's thoughts by the return of Jews to the Holy Land.

The physical strength of secular Zionists who build the new state of Israel with their own hands is also given a symbolic meaning. The new vessels of light – that is the bodies of Jews – must be given strength so that they will not break again. According to Kook the national feelings of Jews are holy, even if some Jews are impure from the religious standpoint. Kook tried to give modernity, nationalism and secularism a sacred dimension. Kook did not deny the contemporary world, like many other orthodox Jews did at that time, but recognized it and even glorified it. Kook wanted to incorporate everything into religion, to apply the sacred to all existence. This was according to the Israeli scholar Gideon Aran an attempt to rescue religion from crisis and to return it to its previous supremacy, at a time when secular Zionism dominated in Palestine.

The son of Abraham Isaac Kook, Zvi Yehuda Kook, was a marginal figure for many years. He became the leader of his father's yeshiva only after the terms of several other rabbis had ended. He did not write much and it is foremost as the guru of Gush Emunim that he became influential in Israel. Zvi Yehuda Kook's interpretation of his father's teachings was selective and the son used his association with his father effectively, exploiting every opportunity to mention his father. One could say that Zvi Yehuda's charisma was inherited to a large extent from his father. Further, Zvi Yehuda claimed for himself a unique authority to interpret his father's teachings. The son shifted the teachings from a universal conception of salvation to a narrow Jewish nationalism. Secular Zionists, beside the religious Zionists, are the only people who can be saved in the future in the messianic vision of Zvi Yehuda Kook. In his teachings we have a mix of Torah orthodoxy and strict Halaah observance, along with a kind of nationalist messianism. The mystical aspects of the father's messianism are missing from the son's interpretation; what is left is an activist and revolutionary messianism that depends solely on Jews. The concrete political line of Zvi Yehuda Kook after 1967 was opposition towards any withdrawal from the land of the Greater Israel, which at least included the East Bank, that is Jordan, besides the actual land that Israel controlled at that time.

According to Kook the Torah speaks of planting trees in the Holy Land, not establishing yeshivas. The Israeli flag, the Israeli army, the Israeli national anthem and the Day of Independence are holy according to Kook. One could say that he sacralised Zionism and Israel. A militarily strong Israel is seen as proof of the coming redemption and evidence that the state will embody the biblical kingdom. Everything about the Israeli army

is holy, even the weapons used by the army which are made by gentiles. The attitude of the son must be understood against the historical changes of his time. Zvi Yehuda formulated his teachings after the Holocaust and constant bloodshed and wars between Jews and Arabs. He had a much less positive world-view than his father did, and strongly negative feelings for non-Jews and non-Jewish culture.

Both father and son Kook created an ideological base for religious Zionism and the settler movement, Gush Emunim, and the Mercaz Ha-Rav Yeshiva supplied an important institutional base for spreading their ideology. Gush Emunim cannot, however, only be understood as the creation of two persons. These two leaders also responded to needs and trends in their surrounding environment and were dependent on support from other individuals. For example, a group of youths rebelled against contemporary religious Zionists in the early 1950s. They were frustrated with the humiliating position of religion in Israel. They named themselves Gahelet, which means 'glowing ember' and referred to their self-image as the preservers of Torah. Their goal was a national religious revolution. They tried to spread their mission through the religious Zionist youth movement Bnei Akiva, which led to tensions in the movement. Gahelet came even more into conflict with religious Zionist leaders when they converted their Nahal army service – a combination of frontline duty with life on a border kibbutz – into yeshiva studies. When they met Zvi Yehuda Kook there was a mutual bond, despite his sacralisation of the army and their abandonment of army service. The members of Gahelet soon became the dominant force in the Mercaz Ha-Rav Yeshiva.

It is difficult to determine a precise date for the beginning of Gush Emunim. It emerged in the mid-1970s under the slogan 'The Whole Land of Israel' as an activist movement for the annexation of the occupied territories. The name Gush Emunim was coined in February 1974 at kibbutz Kfar Etzion in the Occupied Territories and immediately used in the media. However, there are some even earlier events that were important to the origin of Gush Emunim. In the spring of 1968 Rabbi Levinger and about ten followers with their families celebrated Passover in a hotel in Hebron. That night they planned a strategy of settling the land and later became the spearhead of the settler movement. Although Gush Emunim is a relatively small group, they have had a decisive role in determining the agenda of public life in Israel.

One principal strategy of Gush Emunim is the 'biblicisation' of the West Bank. Places given biblical significance are Shechem (Nablus), Hebron, Anatot, Shiloh and Beit-El (Bethel), and other well-known sites mentioned

in the Holy Scriptures. Moshe Levinger, one of the leading activists and pioneers of Gush Emunim, once said the following:

> Samaria and Judea belonged to the Jewish people even before 1967. We've known that they belong to us throughout all history … It's God's will. No Jew prayed three times a day that he'd come back to Tel Aviv or Haifa, but for centuries we did pray to come back to Jerusalem, Hebron and Nablus. The tombs of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are here. Hebron was David's capital. And until the Arabs slaughtered the community of scholars in the 1920s, there were Jews in Hebron during all the years of the Diaspora. (Heilman 1997: 331.)

Support is mobilised by accentuating such places as religiously significant for the Jews. The Occupied Territories are called Judea and Samaria, which further accentuates the activism of Gush Emunim as having a religious significance. By settling and uniting these territories with the rest of Israel they are performing *tikkun*, the kabbalistic concept of repairing and transforming the whole universe. Rabbi Levinger once even stated that the Jewish settlements in the holy cities of the West Bank are for the good of Arabs themselves. By self-definition Gush Emunim is a religious movement of professed practicing believers of the Halakah. At the same time support is mobilised by using non-religious arguments such as pointing out that what they term Judea and Samaria are of vital importance to Israel from a military-strategic point of view. Slogans one might find in the history of Gush Emunim include 'Withdrawal from the Holy Land – Over Our Dead Bodies', or 'Not an Inch', or 'Do or Die', pointing out the activist feature. In terms of their religious legacy, Gush Emunim ascribe themselves the role of the Macabeans, who fought the Syrian Hellenistic occupation in the second century BC and the Zealots (*kanaim*) who fought the Roman occupation in the first century AD.

Gush Emunim do not officially embrace an ideology of violence. Instead they advocate peaceful coexistence with local Arabs. However, individuals such as Rabbi Levinger have a history of walking around in Palestinian cities and provoking the local people, and have at least in one case shot a Palestinian dead, for which the rabbi was indicted. Members of Gush Emunim have on some occasions radicalised and used revolutionary and millennial violence. The most important example is the Jewish Underground, which was a small group of perhaps ten members that during the early 1980s planned to blow up the Muslim holy buildings on the Temple Mount. The leaders of the Jewish Underground thought that God

was angry with the Jews for not building the Third Temple and that the Yom Kippur War was a punishment for this sin. Simultaneously they knew that such an attack would probably lead to a new war between Israel and its Arab neighbour states, in which they hoped that Israel would win more land. However, the Israeli security service stopped and imprisoned the members of the group before they could execute their plan.

The Jewish Underground was affiliated with a larger network called Terror Against Terror (TNT), which was behind several terror attacks against Palestinians between 1978 and 1994, for example the bombing of a soccer stadium which injured two children, and a drive-by attack with machine-guns and hand-grenades on Hebron University, which killed four students. TNT also had connections to Kahanism, to which we now turn our attention. Meir Kahane was, for example, arrested by the Israeli police for arranging a demonstration in support of TNT. This indicates that leaders and followers of different radical groups and organisations can cooperate, despite some disagreements on ideological and religious matters. There are, for example, several affinities between secular right-wing Zionism and religious Zionism, including their view of the centrality of religion in Jewish national culture (Shavit 1988: 158–60). Attempts and plans by the Jewish Underground to attack the Muslim buildings on the Temple Mount have been foiled by the Israeli security service on several occasions. In May 2005 a group of Jewish radicals were arrested for planning a missile and grenade attack against the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aksa Mosque. A suicide attack has also been prevented, which included an attempt to crash a manned air drone packed with explosives on the Temple Mount during mass Muslim worship on the Mount.[4]

Meir Kahane and Kahanism

So-called Kahanism originates with Meir Kahane (1932–90).[5] In his early years Meir Kahane worked as a rabbi in Brooklyn and served as an informer for the FBI. In 1967 he formed the Jewish Defense League (JDL) which was a low middle class response to black militancy in Brooklyn. The

4 http://www.adl.org/main_Terrorism/jewish_terrorism_disengagement.htm (accessed 22 September 2005).

5 The general description of Meir Kahane and Kahanism is based on Mergui and Simonnot 1987; Friedman 1990; Sprinzak 1999: 180–285; Karpin and Friedman 2000.

JDL was depicted in the media as a Jewish version of the Black Panthers. The JDL organised military training for young Jews in the Diaspora and on some few occasions bombs were set off at Soviet diplomatic buildings in retalliation for anti-Semitic incidents in the Soviet Union. In 1971 Kahane moved to Israel, he began to preach the idea that all Jews must migrate to Israel, and formed the Kach party in 1974. In 1984 Kach won one seat in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, but was banned in 1988 as a racist party by the Israeli state. Meir Kahane was killed by an Islamist in 1990 while visiting New York. Kach then split into two organisations, Kach and Kahane Chai, the latter led by Meir Kahane's son Benjamin (1967–2000), who was killed in a Palestinian attack in December 2000. Political parties such as Moledet and Herut (from 2003) can be seen as Kahanist attempts to regain influence in the parliamentary process in Israel.

The goal of Kahanism is theocracy and at times the movement and its different representatives have proposed the deportation of all Arabs from Israeli-controlled territory as a goal. Kahanism also contains the idea of a biblical Greater Israel, although the exact geographical boarders of this future state vary depending on the specific group. Meir Kahane and some later Kahanists were also attracted by the idea of rebuilding the Third Temple. Kahanism has also embraced the doctrine of terror against terror and has been involved in lethal attacks against Palestinians. Kahanist groups find many members among radical religious Zionists on the West Bank. Kiryat Arba and Hebron in particular are inhabited by many radicals.

Both Kach and Kahane Chai have taken violent actions against Palestinians. For example, on the fifth of March 2002, a homemade time bomb exploded in the courtyard of a Palestinian school in the Sur Bahir neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, injuring 24 students and two teachers.[6] New Kahanist splinter-groups have evolved, but some of them disappear after some time. The Committee for Safety on the Roads has specialised in attacking cars driven by Palestinians. It claimed responsibility for two attacks in 1998 and two shootings in 2001 resulting in three deaths and considered the attacks as revenge for attacks on Jewish settlers. The political goal of the Committee for Safety on the Roads is to defend the security of Jewish settlers. Kahane Chai has also attempted to export violence. In October 1995 the group searched for revenge for the bomb attacks against Jewish communities in Argentina by trying to assassinate the top Iranian

6 http://www.adl.org/terrorism/symbols/kahane_2.asp (accessed 17 September 2005).

diplomat in Argentina. The bloodiest attack with connections to Kahanism is Baruch Goldstein's massacre of 29 praying Palestinians at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in February 1994. The political murder of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 also had a Kahanist background, because the killer, Yigal Amir, was a member of a small Kahanist group which called itself Eyal. This murder was far from the first example of political violence between Jews (Ben-Yehuda 2000). Politically influential Jews with other opinions than Kahanists may be seen as as a great threat as Arabs, or as Meir Kahane once said: 'Every Jew who is killed has two killers, the Arab who killed him and the government that let it happen (Juergensmeyer 1994: 165). In connection with the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in August 2005, Noam Federer, an activist suspected of being involved in a plot to plant a bomb in a Palestinian school for girls, said that there is a civil war going on in Israel between Jews.[7]

The most recent serious incident occurred in August 2005, when 19-year-old Eden Nathan-Zada boarded a bus between Haifa and Shfaram and shot four persons dead and wounded 13 before he himself was beaten to death by an Arab mob in Shfaram. Two weeks before the attack he left his post in the army, which explains how he got his weapon. He had moved shortly before that to Kfar Tapuah on the West Bank. He was inspired by Kahanist ideology and became friendly with Kahanists in Kfar Tapuah, who later attended his funeral. He was on the watch list of Shin Beth and his parents knew about his radicalisation and interest in Kahanism, which perhaps began through the Internet.[8]

The Logic of Settler Violence

The socio-political logic of the violence of the Radical Israeli Settler Movement is the ethno-religious struggle for land. Religious differences may enhance this struggle (Pape 2005: 126), and Judaism contains religious traditions that can motivate radicalism. When religious traditions are interpreted as supporting political activism and violence we can speak of a

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7 http://www.guardian.co.uk/israel/Story/0,2763,1432488,00.html (accessed 22 September 2005).

8 For violent attacks by Kahanist-groups, except the references generally on Kahanism, see http://www.tkb.org/MapModule.jsp?showGroups=on&FIPS=IS&regionID=1#cities (accessed 18 September 2005), and http://www.ict.org.il/ (accessed 18 September 2005).

new form of religiosity. The Radical Israeli Settler Movement has its own social logic and it is a modern political movement whose ultimate concerns have a spiritual significance for its members but depend on worldly politics. The most successful leader of a radical movement is not the most religiously learned, but the most skilful entrepreneur and populist who can inspire and motivate people with both secular and religious arguments, such as consideration of Israel's military security. The background of leaders and followers in the Radical Israeli Settler Movement varies, but in the case of violence some patterns can be detected. The typical pattern is a young frustrated man with ideologically motivated dreams about a Jewish superpower of biblical dimensions and direct experiences of violence, through military service and/or a relative or close friend who has died in a Palestinian attack.

There is also a strategic logic to the violence of the Radical Israeli Settler Movement. Israeli radicalism tends to become violent in connection with breakthroughs in peace processes between Israel and Arabs that involves giving up land. The Jewish Underground can be seen as a reaction to the Camp David Accords of 1978 and the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. Baruch Goldstein's shooting of praying Palestinians in 1994 and Yigal Amir's political assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 can be seen as a reaction to the Oslo Agreements. Palestinian political violence follows the same logic; violent attacks are an effective method to stop peace initiatives. From this perspective Israeli and Palestinian radicals work in the same direction. So far, there are three main types of violence originating from the radical Israeli settlers: (1) hooliganism against and beatings of Palestinian civilians and Jews, (2) lethal attacks against Palestinian civilians, by (a) bombing Palestinian civilians, (b) shooting Palestinian civilians, and (c) shooting in 'no escape' missions against Palestinian civilians (which should not be confused with suicide attacks, because the success of the attack does not depend on the attacker's death), and finally (3) political assassinations against Jews.

The trend after the Jewish Underground has been ideologically motivated individuals who belong to radical movements and execute violent attacks on their own, without sharing their plans with anyone else. The context of these attacks is a democratic state that works seriously to stop violence by radical groups. The Israeli security service monitors different Jewish radical groups, but is not allowed to arrest individuals for their political opinions. Radicals know that it is easier to locate a group of people planning an attack than an individual who either plans something or implements an action spontaneously. Further, if a group of individuals

belonging to the same organisation executes an attack, it is easier to prosecute the whole organisation. There is a similar pattern among right-wing radicals in the USA who have developed the idea of leaderless resistance: if a violent course of action is taken it should be carried out without involving the wider organisation (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2000: 171–4). Another aspect of the context is that most Israelis do not support violence by Jewish radical groups against Palestinians. This probably has a restraining effect on radical Jewish groups, who are often concerned about public opinion in Israel.

From a theoretical perspective it is possible to conclude the following: violence can occur when members of the radical group experience a dissonance between their ultimate concerns, the political goal and the actual situation. Violence is chosen when it is seen as the most effective way to achieve a political goal that can be reconciled with the ultimate concern. The fewer the options that members of a radical movement can discern, the higher the likelihood that violence will be chosen. When violence is seen as ineffective, or even counter-productive, the political goals can be reinterpreted in the light of the ultimate concerns. What influences individual interpretations and what they see as effective means is determined by ideology and context. The ultimate concern in the Radical Israeli Settler Movement is a biblical Israel with all its possible connotations. The foremost political goals today consist of keeping the West Bank and Jerusalem. Everything threatening these goals can lead to violence. Palestinian violence today plays into the hands of the Radical Israeli Settler Movement because this is an alternative to settler violence, since both aim at stopping the peace process. Continuing violence seems to be a better option than unacceptable peace in the eyes of radicals on both sides. This is supported by a Jewish settler who told me in an interview (14 February 2005) that violence is the natural state of existence in the Middle East until the Messiah arrives.

Concluding Remarks on Future Comparisons

It is now time for the general theoretical issues presented at the beginning of this article to be addressed. The discussion of the Radical Israeli Settler Movement concerns one specific socio-cultural context and focuses on a few similar and, from a genealogical perspective, related groups and organisations. What general conclusions can be abstracted from this context and tested in other ethno-religious conflicts? First of all, this study is main-

ly relevant to radical political movements where religious ideology and ethnic identity are intertwined. The ultimate concern of such movements is unworldly politics and power, which are interpreted in religious terms.

Other relevant contexts to analyse in order to further understand so-called ethno-religious movements using political violence are Northern Ireland, Kurdistan, Sri Lanka, Punjab and Kashmir in India, and Chechnya. Future detailed studies of how ethno-religious movements in these contexts continuously reinterpret their ultimate concerns as concrete political goals as the social conditions change, can help in gathering comparative data on the origins of violence. In all these cases the struggle is about political control over land. In most of these contexts, radical groups have evolved on both sides of the conflict, considerably influencing each other. If social, political and economic grievances are unsolved, including the issue of land, and the ultimate concern is interpreted as impossible to realise, the conflict will continue as long as the stronger ethnic part restrains its violence or is unable or unwilling to destroy its enemy. Unsatisfactory peace processes can even be seen as especially threatening. Suicide attacks have – so far – only been used by radical groups that belong to the weaker side of the conflict. They are weaker by virtue of belonging to the militarily less powerful side, a side that often suffers from relative social and economic deprivation. However, which side should be seen as stronger or weaker depends on what perspective is chosen, and is also dependent on other actors in the region or globally. Extensive comparative studies must be made before we can understand how ethno-religious movements can de-radicalise and find within themselves the possibility of peaceful compromise.

In most cases there is a clear factor of religious difference in the conflict: there is often a case of belonging to different religions. However, significant religious difference can be found also inside religions. In the conflict in Northern Ireland both sides are Christian, but one is Catholic and the other Protestant. The Kurds also have their own form of Islam: the Alevi tradition. There are also conflicts within ethnic groups: between secular and religious individuals and movements, but also between different religious groups and institutions. New religious ideologies can be created or imported and come into conflict with older ones. The different choices that ethno-religious movements make depend not only on the perceived enemy, but also on the ability of these movements to mobilise support for their goals, both locally and globally. Some studies suggest that religion is not a cause of political violence, but that religious difference, religious grievances or religious repression can exacerbate the conflict and escalate violence (Fox

2004: 125, 136). This is in many situations the most reasonable conclusion, but sometimes religious grievances and religious ideology can be a direct cause of violence, while other grievances can nurture and exacerbate the conflict. When American Jewish religious radicals arrive in Israel, for instance Meir Kahane, Baruch Goldstein and Alan Goodman, who came to Jerusalem in 1981 and shot two Muslims dead on the Temple Mount, religious ideology can be considered as a cause of ethno-religious violence. When international jihadists arrive in the USA, Kashmir or Chechnya and organise attacks, religious ideology should be considered as at least one of a selection of prime causes of ethno-religious violence.

When new forms of religion are created and imported, we must be aware that religious ideas may be a direct cause of violence, but this does not mean that religion is the only cause. This would be a fallacy, because religion is always imbedded in economic, political and socio-cultural contexts. When there is rapid change in the religious landscape of an ethnic group, for example, with the emergence of new movements, the existing political situation can suddenly be deemed unacceptable by such movements, which can initiate a campaign of violence. The introduction of new movements and ideologies may lead to violence within the ethnic group, which in turn may affect the conflict with an ethnic outsider. So far, the importance of religious diversity in ethnic groups has largely been overlooked by scholars. Many scholars seem to work within a 'clash of civilizations' paradigm, whether it is from the perspective of a conspiracy of European racism, American imperialism and Zionism or the essentialist discourse of Islamist fanatics as the eternal enemy of West. Paradoxically, while the differences within ethno-religious groups are somehow sources of volatility, they also offer opportunities for moderating conflicts, because if less radical actors are strengthened, more compromising political goals can gain momentum.

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